

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

MARCH 11, 2015

The Special Council Meeting of the Council of the County of Kaua'i was called to order by Council Chair Mel Rapozo at the Council Chambers, 4396 Rice Street, Suite 201, Lihu'e, Kaua'i, on Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 8:37 a.m., after which the following members answered the call of the roll:

Honorable Ross Kagawa
Honorable Arryl Kaneshiro
Honorable KipuKai Kuali'i
Honorable JoAnn A. Yukimura (*present at 8:38 a.m.*)
Honorable Mel Rapozo

Excused: Honorable Mason K. Chock
 Honorable Gary L. Hooser

APPROVAL OF AGENDA.

Councilmember Kuali'i moved for approval of the agenda as circulated, seconded by Councilmember Kagawa, and carried by a vote of 5:0:2 (*Councilmember Chock and Councilmember Hooser were excused*).

INTERVIEW:

1. COST CONTROL COMMISSION:

- James D. Whitfield – Term ending 12/31/2017

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you for being here and volunteering to serve. We all have received a copy of your application. If you would start by just giving a brief overview of yourself and then we will open it up for questions from the Members.

JAMES D. WHITFIELD: My wife and I moved to Kaua'i from O'ahu back in July 2011. We planned to stay here. We bought our home back in 2000 and were leasing it and asked ourselves one day, "Why are we still on O'ahu when our house is over on Kaua'i." At present, I am somewhat retired. I have been a Professor at Hawai'i Pacific University for the last twelve (12) years. I am not flying back and forth as much as I used to and sadly, I will be losing my Platinum status this year with Hawaiian Airlines, but that means more money in my pockets, so I suppose that is okay. I have more time to devote to community activities. At present, I am President of the East Kaua'i Lions Club and I appreciate the opportunity to be considered to work with the government here on Kaua'i. I have lived here in Hawai'i since we came here twelve (12) years ago. You have my resume. I do not want to belabor the point, but I have the time to serve and make myself useful to the community.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you very much. Any questions from the Members? Councilmember Yukimura.

Councilmember Yukimura: Good morning. Thank you for applying and your willingness to serve. You have a very interesting resume. Somehow, the first, Academic Publication and Presentations caught my eyes – TruthatULM.

Mr. Whitfield: TruthatULM.

Councilmember Yukimura: “TruthatULM: The Anonymous David Slays the Political Goliath, But At What Cost?”

Mr. Whitfield: Yes, that was a mess. Pardon?

Councilmember Yukimura: I am just reading the title. “The Anonymous David Slays The Political Goliath, But At What Cost, In Contemporary Media Ethics: A Practical Guide For Students, Scholars And Professionals.” ULM was a university.

Mr. Whitfield: University of Louisiana at Monroe, yes.

Councilmember Yukimura: Was that an issue of ethics, I presume?

Mr. Whitfield: Very much so, as well as economics.

Councilmember Yukimura: The board you are being appointed to is a Cost Control Board, do you have any experience looking at budgets and looking at things, not that you have to, because we are wanting a layperson’s perspective on the budget.

Mr. Whitfield: I am not an accountant, but I do not have any debts, nor do I believe in deficit spending personally nor I think at any other body. I have worked with budgets as a newspaper editor back in a former life. I have been a department head at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. I had a lot of insights of what was going on there. I was a founding head of a department that we had very strict budget controls that we had to deal with for a number of years. I was a Transitional Dean in college at Hawai’i Pacific University for two (2) years. Therefore, yes, I do have experience working with budgets, evaluating budgets, and making a number of budgetary decisions.

Councilmember Yukimura: Have you had any experience in working with government before?

Mr. Whitfield: Only at the academic level, which is one of the worst levels of government, anybody could do. As far as working with government, other than covering governmental bodies as a journalist, no. I have never been on your side.

Councilmember Yukimura: But you have covered the operations of government from a journalistic perspective.

Mr. Whitfield: Yes, for several years.

Councilmember Yukimura: Do you have any thoughts about this County’s budget or are you coming in with sort of a blank slate and going to be learning?

Mr. Whitfield: I am going to learn on the job, and I am coming in with a blank slate. I do not want to prejudge. I have looked at the minutes

of the last Cost Control Commission Meeting, have seen some of the documents you have, and I have no judgments about anything. I am the type of person that needs data before I make a decision.

Councilmember Yukimura: You are a good Professor if you look at data.

Mr. Whitfield: I try.

Councilmember Yukimura: Just to let you know that we are going to be going into budget sessions and hearings starting the last week of this month which is an everyday thing, or you can watch it through Ho'iike, our public television, or on the website. You may find the hearings that we go through, we go through Department by Department, insightful in terms of the mission of the Cost Control Commission.

Mr. Whitfield: I think I would like to be there then, yes.

Councilmember Yukimura: Actually, we should tell the other Cost Control Commission members the same thing. Thank you for your answers and for your willingness to serve.

Mr. Whitfield: Thank you very much, Councilmember Yukimura.

Council Chair Rapozo: Did anyone else have questions?
Councilmember Kagawa.

Councilmember Kagawa: Thank you for applying. Is that your wife?

Mr. Whitfield: That is my wife, Charlotte.

Councilmember Kagawa: Hello, Charlotte. Thank you for applying and I will be supporting your nomination. I think your resume shows that you are a highly educated person with a lot of experience, including military and volunteering. I like what you bring. A highly educated person like you has the ability to learn on the job and I think with your background and leadership, I hope that you can bring some different thoughts and solid decision making to the body. At the County level, we are in tough times now and I believe we need tough individuals to stand up for the people and make sure that government is doing its best to control cost. Like you said, you do not have any debt, you do not believe in debt, and I think that the County needs to try to learn from people like you, from the private and home sectors and bring those values here so that we cut waste.

Mr. Whitfield: Thank you and I will try to do my best.

Councilmember Kualii'i: I do not have a question, but I wanted to make a couple quick statements. First, I wanted to say thank you for your willingness to serve and step forward. I am always impressed at the high caliber of people who have completed their full careers and maybe are coming here to retire and then are still willing to keep working for the community and step forward. Thank you so much. I noticed that in your description here you stated basically what the basic role of the Commission is. You spelled out reviewing personnel costs and property taxes. I think those two (2) issues are clearly the highest areas because more than eighty percent (80%) of our expenses are personnel related costs and probably more than eighty

percent (80%) of our revenue comes from property taxes. Those two are of the highest priority. I just wanted to make sure you are aware that we, as a County, have this Vacancy Review Committee who is tasked with reviewing positions that are vacant since July 1, 2014. Being that it is one of the highest areas of expense, their goal is to reduce the size of government where appropriate, re-describe vacant positions to create efficiencies, and to serve as the sounding board to explore organizational, personnel, and technological alternatives.

Mr. Whitfield:

Right.

Councilmember Kualii: As a part of your job and everyone else's on the Cost Control Commission, I hope you will work closely with Human Resources and with this Vacancy Review Committee to find more efficiencies in our operations. Thank you again for your service.

Mr. Whitfield:

Thank you.

Council Chair Rapozo: Thank you. Anyone else? If not, let me just say that reading your application, it was pretty clear to me that you were provided a copy of the Charter, or at least the Charter section that pertains to the Cost Control Commission.

Mr. Whitfield:

Right.

Council Chair Rapozo: I like that. If the Cost Control Commission ran like the Charter requires it to, it is a very powerful Commission for this County. I know when I was first elected back in 2002, there was no Commission. It was in the Charter, it was mandated, but no one did it. I can remember and Councilmember Yukimura probably remembers this, but I remember telling her that we have to fill this position. I remember this because it was shocking to me that she said, "Mel, mayors do not like Cost Control Commissions," and JoAnn was a former Mayor. It made sense because if you look at the Charter, and I am going to leave this with you because I hope you can take this back to the Commission...because we have a disconnect. Many of the recommendations that came out of the Cost Control Commission recently were not cost cutting, it was revenue generation. It was, "Hey, your golf course fees are too low..." It was, "How can we raise more money," and that is not the function of this Commission. The goal is to reduce the cost of government while maintaining a reasonable level of service. That is the goal of the Commission. It is not to go look for ways to generate money to pay for the cost of government, it is where do we cut. You will review personnel costs, property taxes, and all of the revenue generating tools that we have for the purpose with the aim of eliminating programs and services available or more sufficiently supplied by other governments or organizations. That is the function of the Cost Control Commission. Not, "Okay we have this money and we have to go out and find ways to pay for it." No, that is not your job. I hope you can take that back to the Commission, at least in your mind so as you do your day-to-day deliberations, you understand what your role is. The most powerful part of this Commission is the last section. Section 28.07 states, "The commission is empowered to secure from any department, agency, official or employee, any report of information the commission requests," which is more powerful than a subpoena. You have that ability and no one can tell you no. If someone tells you, "No," I need to know about it. The other part that makes this Commission powerful, even more powerful than this body, "The commission may request that any of its recommendations be drafted in ordinance form for introduction through the mayor." Let us say that you believe that a department needs to cut four

(4) positions in your deliberations, the Mayor at that point has no option but to send that bill over to us. He cannot say no. He can put comments and say that he disagrees, but he cannot amend it. Your recommendations go to the Mayor, his staff drafts it in a bill form that comes here, and then it has its day here with the public hearings and all of that. That has to be done within thirty (30) days. The Mayor cannot delay it. That is a powerful commission and that is the commission that I suspect you will be appointed to later today. I hope you take that information, digest it, and understand that in the times we are going through today, is a very important and powerful commission. Did you know that?

Mr. Whitfield: I did not realize there was so much power in this Commission. That certainly puts extra obligation on the members.

Council Chair Rapozo: Some will tell you otherwise. I am reading it straight from the Charter. That is the law. That is the power you have. The objective is to find ways to reduce spending and not increase revenue to pay for our spending. Thank you very much.

Mr. Whitfield: Thank you.

Councilmember Kualii: The other thing that I wanted to put forward is that in my preparations for the upcoming budget, I will go back and review the last several years of the Cost Control Commission's annual reports. Part of your job is to do this annual report through the Mayor with recommendations that Chair Rapozo was referring to. I am going to go back and review that and I think it would be a good start as a new Commission member to go back and see what they have recommended in the past.

Mr. Whitfield: Yes, it would be.

Councilmember Kualii: But obviously we are coming into some really tough times economically, so we are going to need even more bold recommendations, I believe, and that the power is there so I hope you and the Commission will use that to help us do our job.

Mr. Whitfield: I will do the best that I can. I will try.

Council Chair Rapozo: Councilmember Yukimura.

Councilmember Yukimura: I just want to give another perspective on this. It is true that the Cost Control Commission focuses on cutting costs. I just hope that everyone who does the budget understands that part of the role of government is also to look to the future and to plan so that we will have a functioning community. It may not be a job of the Cost Control Commission to make sure that we have adequate revenues to set the foundation for the future, whether it is moving into a more energy efficient world, or a more multi-modal transportation system, or developing a better education system which is not the County's goal, but it is government's. Your role is not the budget. Your role is cutting costs, but nonetheless there has to be a framework of the big picture as you do your work.

Mr. Whitfield: Sure.

Councilmember Yukimura: Because you may, cut something that looks irrelevant, but may be key to building affordable housing. Our Housing Agency is on

a shoestring right now and cannot do that herculean work that is ahead without adequate resources.

Council Chair Rapozo: There are many views out there, Councilmember Yukimura has hers, and everyone has theirs. I just read what is in the Charter.

Mr. Whitfield: Right.

Council Chair Rapozo: You decide what needs to be cut based on your analysis. I believe you will be confirmed here today, but after hearing Councilmember Kualii, when he has his information compiled by our Staff, I will ask our Staff to make that available for you so you do not have to track that down. We will compile what he is requesting and we will have that sent to...are you living in Honolulu right now?

Mr. Whitfield: I live here.

Council Chair Rapozo: I am reading your application. Make sure we have your current address as you leave because your application is showing your Honolulu address.

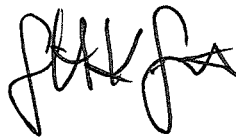
Mr. Whitfield: You have it.

Council Chair Rapozo: Perfect. Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



SCOTT K. SATO
Council Services Review Officer

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